

Delaware Effectively Ends Veteran Homelessness

More than 400 veterans have been permanently housed since January 2015

New Castle, DE – Governor Markell announced on Friday that Delaware has effectively ended veteran homelessness, receiving certification last month from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Vice President Joe Biden, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro and Governor Markell made the announcement Friday at the Delaware Commission of Veterans' Affairs annual Veterans Day ceremony at the Delaware Veterans Memorial Park in New Castle. Governor Markell committed Delaware to First Lady Michelle Obama's national Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness during his State of the State address in January 2015. Since that time, Delaware has housed 414 formerly homeless veterans.

"As I said almost two years ago, even one homeless veteran is one too many," said Governor Markell. "This Veterans Day, as we honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, I am proud to say that Delaware has stepped up for our veterans in need. We now have systems in place to ensure that veteran homelessness is a rare occurrence, and is prevented whenever possible. We will remain committed to this effort, and to getting our veterans the help and resources they need and deserve."

"Every person who has served our nation in uniform deserves a safe, stable place to call home. Today, Delaware has shown ending veteran homelessness is not just aspirational, but achievable," said HUD Secretary Castro. "I'm proud to

congratulate Governor Markell, his dedicated team, and their strong local partners for ensuring permanent housing solutions for the brave men and women who've sacrificed so much for our nation."

"One of the best things we can do to honor our servicemen and women is to take good care of them once they finish their time in our military," said U.S. Senator Tom Carper, a 23-year veteran of the Navy. "Today's announcement that Delaware has effectively ended veteran homelessness is a wonderful example for the nation of what can be done when local, state and federal partners come together to help our community."

Gary Dawkins, an Honorably Discharged U.S. Army veteran who became homeless after difficulty finding employment, also attended Friday's announcement. Dawkins found shelter at Home of the Brave and participated in a Department of Labor workforce training program. He later became eligible for public housing for seniors through the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA).

"The road to overcoming any challenge is persistence, passion, and patience," Dawkins said. "If you do the right thing, others will see that and follow your example."

Leadership of all three Delaware counties and mayors in eight towns and cities – Wilmington, Newark, Dover, Seaford, Georgetown, Bridgeville, Blades and Greenwood – committed to Delaware's initiative to end veteran homelessness. DSHA led the statewide working group since early last year, bringing together provider groups, local officials, county governments, and other partner organizations to coordinate resources on behalf of veterans facing homelessness in Delaware.

Together, the group developed a formal process to share data about veteran homelessness; increased targeting of the most intensive resources to homeless veterans with the greatest need; and improved connections between veteran-specific

resources and resources for homelessness prevention and rapid-rehousing. DSHA and the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services also set aside state-funded rental assistance vouchers for homeless veterans who did not qualify for federal assistance.

“We were proud to lead this effort and help coordinate services so we can more effectively help veterans who face the prospect of homelessness,” said Anas Ben Addi, Director of the Delaware State Housing Authority. “After volunteering to serve our country, no veteran should be left without a place to turn. We believe the changes that we’ve made will make a real difference in the lives of veterans here in Delaware, and we will continue to refine and improve this effort.”

Partners in Delaware’s statewide initiative to end veteran homelessness included local and county governments; the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; the Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs; the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services; the Homeless Planning Council of Delaware; Delaware Continuum of Care; and Supportive Services for Veterans Families providers, including Connections and the Veterans Multi-Service Center.

“On a day when Americans come together to honor the sacrifices of our nation’s veterans, I am so pleased we can mark this occasion with a declaration of progress and support for Delaware veterans deserving our help. The milestone announced in Delaware today is a reminder that federal, state, and local governments can solve large complex problems when they use evidence-based approaches and work together,” said U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald.

“I am proud that VA has partnered with a wide range of organizations to prevent and end veteran homelessness and is providing healthcare, education, job training, and wraparound supportive services to more veterans than ever. To sustain the

progress in Delaware and other communities that have achieved this important goal and also encourage continued progress in places that have not yet ended veteran homelessness, ongoing investment is critical. VA will not let up until every veteran has permanent housing.”

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs hosted Friday’s announcement at its annual Veterans Day ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park at the Delaware Memorial Bridge.

“The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs is proud to have contributed to ending veteran homelessness in Delaware,” said Larence Kirby, Executive Director of the Commission. “Many veterans face housing struggles and when we had a chance to help through federal and state agencies, we jumped at the chance. With the help of these agencies, Delaware now has the teamwork and resources available to ensure that homeless veterans can be set on the path towards permanent housing.”